

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A semiconductor wafer having no photoresist craters at the completion of a two-step post-apply resist bake (soft bake) in the fabrication of an integrated circuit. A process and method for soft baking the semiconductor wafer so that photoresist layers are free of surface voids or craters. The semiconductor wafer is coated with resist and then baked at both a low-bake temperature and a high-bake temperature. It is theorized that the lower temperature bake either hardens the resist layer before trapped air expands through the resist or displaces the trapped air while the resist layer remains fluid and returns to its conformal shape.